

# Catholic Social Teaching

## A Key to Catholic Identity

Presented by:

Ron Krietemeyer  
Office for Social Justice  
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

## A Key to Catholic Identity

Just as the social teaching of the Church is integral to Catholic faith, the social justice dimensions of teaching are integral to Catholic education and catechesis. They are an essential part of Catholic identity and formation.

If Catholic education and formation fail to communicate our social tradition, they are not fully Catholic.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*  
U.S. Bishops, 1998

## The Problem

Far too many Catholics are unfamiliar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social mission of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith.

This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*  
U.S. Bishops, 1998

## U.S. Bishops:

The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly “Catholic” unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace.

*Communities of Salt and Light, U.S. Bishops, 1993*

## Essential Elements of Church

- ❖ **Scripture** -- hearing the Good News
- ❖ **Sacraments** -- worship, prayer life, etc.
- ❖ **Social Mission** -- action for social justice

## Justice in the World, 1971 Synod

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

## Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ Rooted in the Bible
- ❖ Continually developed in Catholic Social Teaching

## Biblical themes of justice

- ❖ God is active in human history
- ❖ Creation
- ❖ Covenant relationship
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Challenge of the prophets
- ❖ *Anawim* -- "the widows, orphans and aliens"
- ❖ The example of Jesus – reign of God, healing

## Modern Catholic Social Teaching

1891	Rerum Novarum	Leo XIII
1931	Quadragesimo Anno	Pius XI
1961	Mother and Teacher	John XXIII
1963	Peace on Earth	John XXIII
1965	Church in the Modern World	Vatican II
1967	The Development of Peoples	Paul VI
1971	A Call to Action	Paul VI
1971	Justice in the World	Synod of Bishops
1979	Redeemer of Humanity	John Paul II
1981	On Human Work	John Paul II
1988	On Social Concern	John Paul II
1991	The One Hundredth Year	John Paul II
1995	The Gospel of Life	John Paul II

## Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ Human dignity
- ❖ Community, common good
- ❖ Rights and duties
- ❖ Option for the poor
- ❖ The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- ❖ Care for Creation
- ❖ Solidarity

## 1. Human dignity

The person is sacred,  
made in the image of God.

## 2. Community / Common Good

The social nature of the human person

The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other....humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of life in society.

Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*

*“Every man for himself,” said the elephant  
as he danced among the chickens.*

Charles Dickens

### **3. Rights and duties**

- ❖ Civil/political
- ❖ Economic/social

Every person has a right to the basic material necessities that are required to live a decent life.

### **4. Option for the Poor**

- ❖ Remember the “widows, orphans, and aliens.”
- ❖ A necessary element of the common good

### **5. The dignity of work and the rights of workers**

- ❖ Work has dignity because it is performed by the human person.
- ❖ Workers have a right to just wages, safe working conditions, collective bargaining, economic initiative.

### **6. Care for Creation**

The goods of the earth are gifts.

We hold them in trust.

## 7. The Virtue of Solidarity

“It is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all ...because we are all really responsible for all.”

Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, 1987

## Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ Human dignity
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Rights and duties
- ❖ Option for the poor
- ❖ The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- ❖ Care for Creation
- ❖ Solidarity

## Four Major Findings from U.S. Bishops' Statement

- ❖ General lack of knowledge among Catholics
- ❖ Need for leadership formation and faculty training
- ❖ Need to be more explicit in teaching the principles of Catholic social thought
- ❖ Need to go beyond direct service to social justice

## Internet Resources on Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ <http://www.osjspm.org/cst>
- ❖ <http://www.osjspm.org/justed.htm>
- ❖ <http://www.mcgill.pvt.k12.al.us/jerryd/cm/cst.htm>

This PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded at the following web address:

<http://www.osjspm.org/cst.ppt>

Conclusion

Salt and Light for the World

“You’re supposed to be the leaven in the loaf, not part of the lump.”

# **Catholic Social Teaching**

**A Key to Catholic Identity**

Office for Social Justice  
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis  
328 West Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55102  
651.291.4477 <http://www.osjspm.org>